

# ST. HELENS MIST

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## THE COUNTY OFFICIAL PAPER

### A DIFFERENT SYSTEM

The road work on the Columbia Highway through this county is nearly all being done by contractors from outside Columbia County. They have almost invariably sublet the various contracts and the sub-contractors have also sublet to others. This system of sub-contracting has gone to such extent that the people are wondering whether or not there is any money to be made by the people who are actually doing the work and whether or not the contract price being paid by the county for the work is excessive for that kind of work. Every person has a separate idea on the questions, hardly any two having the same opinion. To many of the tax payers it looks as though the price being paid by the county is too high and that the work should be done for much less money, and could be if the work was contracted to local men who have the interests of the county at heart, and this argument was hardly to be disputed until the bids for the work on the Nehalem road were submitted when it was found that with one single exception the bids of local men were higher than were those of the outside bidders. In some instances the local men were prepared with all the necessary machinery and equipment to go on and do the work really at less cost than could any outside contractor bring in equipment with which to do the work, and yet these local men, tax payers and residents of the county, bid considerably more than did the outsiders. So it would seem that when residents of the county will bid more for doing the same work, being familiar with all conditions in their locality, having the necessary equipment, and fully able to handle the job, will bid more than the foreign firms, it must be said that the work is being done as cheaply as it can be done for under the contracting system.

Now the questions as to whether the county can do the work at less cost than can contractors will be settled for the Columbia City-Warren road bids were opened by the Court last Saturday, only one bid being submitted and that of the firm of Jeffrey & Pufton of Portland, which the Court rejected as being too high and will do the work under the direction of the road master and County Court. This will demonstrate the difference in cost under the contract system and the other system of of County doing its own work. The Mist has no hesitancy in predicting that the work to be done by the County Court will cost far less than the contract work.

Another feature of the work to be handled by the Court is that white men and residents will be given the preference of the work and instead of having crews of illiterate and unnaturalized foreigners and non-taxpayers the farmers and the farmer's horses will be given employment on the public road paid for by the tax payers of the county. Really the Court is to be commended strongly for rejecting the bids on this piece of work and having it done by the people who help pay for it and who can thereby reap some of the benefits of public work in the community.

### IN A HOLE

Some person is to blame very seriously for the sewer situation in St. Helens just at present. The contract for the construction of a sewer in District No. 3 was let to the James Kennedy Construction Co., at a price which was, to say the least, all the property could stand and the specifications as prepared by the City Engineer contained provisions for certain kinds of work. After some months the work was finished, the engineer in charge of the work for the City reported a full compliance with the contract, the city council accepted the sewer and issued warrants for the full amount in payment therefor and passed an ordinance assessing the cost of same to the property owners. Upon trial by some of the residents of the sewer district it was found that the sewer did not work satisfactorily. Tests were made and it was found that the pipe joints were not all cemented and the water would run out instead of going down the pipe. Other experiments were made with the same results.

The situation at this time is anything but satisfactory to the property owners of the city. The contracting company has its money; the property council has accepted the work; the property owners refuse to pay for the sewer until it is finished according to contract. At a later

meeting of the council the action in accepting the sewer was rescinded and the engineer directed to enforce the provisions of the contract and compel the contractors to do the work over again.

Then comes another counter proposition by the contracting company wherein they hold that the city has entered into contracts with them for the construction of sewers in districts 6 and 7 and under the ruling of the court they are enjoined from doing any work in these districts; thereby they were compelled to remove their machinery and discharge their crew and leave the city.

If the city requires them to repair the sewer in district 3 they will probably endeavor to hold the city to its contract in 6 and 7.

The result will in all probability be a continued law suit with all attendant costs and troubles.

Truly somebody is to blame. It would seem that the better plan for the council to have followed would have been to secure the rights of way before letting the contract. It would seem that the city council should have secured the services of an engineer to superintend the work on behalf of the city who was sufficiently competent to see that the interests of the property owners were protected and that they would be getting something for their money. It would also seem that a firm of the standing of the James Kennedy Construction Company would do the work in a manner that could not bring them into such disputes as would ruin their business in the state of Oregon.

But the situation has to be faced. The parties responsible for the blunder must shoulder the blame. The city council is in hole from which it is going to be difficult to emerge to the satisfaction of all concerned.

The biggest event yet to be held in Columbia County during 1914 will be the County Fair in September. Every indication points to a most successful fair. Farmers and fruit growers, stock raisers and manufacturers have signified their intention of having exhibits at the fair. New buildings have been erected thereby insuring plenty of room for all exhibits and new stock sheds will furnish ample room for the housing of live stock. The Columbia County Fair should attract many visitors from outside the county this year and these visitors should be shown what Columbia County produces. As a matter of fact we produce some of the best grains, grasses, fruits and farm produce in the world. We have in the county some of the highest class thoroughbred stock in the world. Our wood factories turn out some choice manufactured products.

We can have an exhibit that will cause visitors, and residents too, to open their eyes in astonishment and to marvel at the greatness of our small county. It is up to Columbia County folks to have such an exhibit. When we do have such an exhibit it is up to the people of the county to attend and otherwise lend every encouragement toward making the 1914 Columbia County Fair the biggest event ever held in the county. Make it what the name implies, a Columbia County Fair, participated in by Columbia County people.

The Tax Liberator is the name of a new publication published at Roseburg by the Oregon Rational Tax Reform Association and which deals exclusively with the tax questions of Oregon. The proposed tax laws which are to be voted on this fall in Oregon are taken up and explained in a very able manner and the information given out by this paper is valuable to every voter in Oregon.

If flirtation is a coeducational institution this town ought to be full of diplomas.

Many a man knows what he would do in the other fellow's place, but he never reaches the place.

We are waiting to hear from our distinguished citizen who annually has a photo taken of himself and a borrowed string of fish.

Huerta went in drunk and came out drunker.

To a discriminating smoker, the one thing better than a good smoke is a better one.

A baby is a mighty good thing to have, but a twenty year old one should be put in the smoke house and cured.

Next to the music of a tree frog, the wail of a disappointed office seeker is about the loneliest sound on earth.

Congress has been engaging in hot debate as to whether prosperity prevails or not. If Old Pros. comes nosing around us we'll nab him without the formality of debate.

Mr. B. C. Forbes, the financial writer for the San Francisco Examiner, makes some pertinent remarks concerning the causes of the present depression in business which are interesting as showing the conditions on Wall Street and the political significance thereof. Some of his remarks follow:

Let none imagine that President Wilson's sudden change of face toward big business has accomplished anything fundamental.

Financiers point out that Wilson set out to govern the United States and its hundred million inhabitants with all the arrogance of a school master lording over a class of children, that he haughtily forbade the country's largest employers of labor and capital to offer him counsel or advice of any kind, or even to enter his presence, and that he surrounded himself with such avowed enemies of business interests as Bryan, McAdoo and Skelton Williams, each with his special grudge to satisfy.

But now, it is explained, Wilson finds he cannot ride rough shod over the nation's employers and is anxious to win them over. His somewhat is regarded as a demonstration of weakness rather than an act of repentance or statesmanship.

Many business men, therefore, are not straining themselves to work up pre-election enthusiasm for the Wilson Administration.

I have said Wall street can enumerate reasons aplenty for its sullenness, woe and lamentation.

Let me dash off a few of the unsettling incidents and influences—many of them of Wall street's own making, which enter the glooming reckoning of the moment and prevent the return of cheerfulness and buoyancy.

- 1—Expectation of a New Haven receivership.
- 2—Nervousness over the Interstate Commerce Commission's un concealed bitterness toward the railroads.
- 3—Fears that Paul M. Warburg may not join the Federal Reserve Board and that amateurs of puny caliber will fill the vacancies, leaving McAdoo and Williams, men of no practical experience, in control.
- 4—Uncertainty over pending Trust legislation.
- 5—Reports that the Interstate Commerce Commission will go after Rock Island, Chicago & Alton and New York Central.
- 6—Expectations that Chesapeake & Ohio dividends will stop.
- 7—Financial troubles overhanging Missouri Pacific, Missouri, Kansas & Texas, Wabash, St. Louis & San Francisco, Chicago & Eastern Illinois, Cincinnati, Hamilton & Dayton, Western Maryland, Denver & Rio Grande, Western Pacific, International & Great Northern and other roads. Railroads with a total of one billion securities outstanding are already in bankruptcy.
- 8—Growing feeling that New York Central's future is in danger.
- 9—Uneasiness over maintenance of Baltimore & Ohio 6 per cent disbursements in face of a deficit after making the payment.
- 10—Shrinkage in demand for new security issues.
- 11—Heavy maturities pending.
- 12—Hidden misgivings in financial circles over the disclosure of the actual facts underlying the Claffin method of doing business and of raising money from banks without giving the most elementary facts on which to base the granting of credit.
- 13—The threatened strike of Western railroads employees (Wall street looks for arbitration and, as always, wage concessions.
- 14—Growth of anarchistic demonstrations and I. W. W.'ism.
- 15—Renewed selling of American investments by Europeans who are dumfounded by the attitude exhibited by the Government and the Interstate Commerce Commission toward the country's own investments.
- 16—Tariff after-effects.
- 17—Mexico, Ulster and Albany.
- 18—Business depression here, in Canada, in most European countries, in Argentina, in Brazil, and elsewhere.
- 19—Impending election turmoil.
- 20—Fall yesterday in several stocks, including Rock Island, New York Central and Baltimore & Ohio, to the lowest point in their history.

These are samples of what Wall Street is finding to worry over.

For my part I had figured that a helpful rate decision would prove the signal for a substantial recovery. But if high politics are to enter into the situation, it may easily be that no great transformation will occur until voters have been given time to register their dissatisfaction with the way things have been going.

To me it is significant that there is a sort of conspiracy of silence among those at the top of the financial heap.

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